



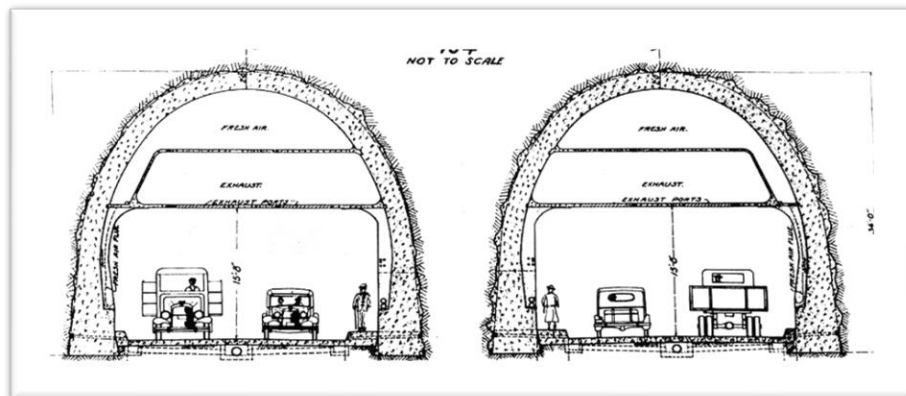
Located on the Lower Level of the Lafayette Library

CONNECTING ALAMEDA AND CONTRA COSTA COUNTIES: Part 2, The Broadway Low Level Tunnel

By the mid-1920s, the Kennedy Tunnel had improved access between Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, but travel was difficult due to the tunnel's steep approaches and narrow width. In 1926, Alameda County, Contra Costa County, and the City of Oakland formed a joint commission to study the idea of moving the tunnel to a lower elevation. By 1929, the two counties had organized Joint Highway District No. 13 to build the Broadway Low Level Tunnel.

Several individuals were important in organizing the joint highway district: Thomas Caldecott, Alameda County Supervisor and president of Joint Highway District No. 13; George Addison Posey, county surveyor in Alameda and chief engineer for Joint Highway District No. 13, who is best remembered for designing the tunnel between Oakland and Alameda that bears his name; and Henry H. Meyers, Alameda County architect. When Posey died in 1932, Wallace B. Boggs, one of Posey's assistants, took over the final design responsibilities and supervised construction.

The original approaches to the tunnel were to extend from Broadway at its intersection with Keith Avenue in Oakland to Walnut Creek in Contra Costa County. In 1931, the district decided not to build the Contra Costa approach, but it still had to design and build 2.82 miles of roadway, .6 miles of which was in the tunnel. The project cost was \$3.75 million: \$1.1 million came from a grant from the federal Public Works Administration, \$700,000 from state gasoline tax money, and the remaining amount from local sources.



On the recommendation of Charles Derluth Jr., a civil and consulting engineer at U.C. Berkeley, the proposed tunnel would consist of twin horse-shoe shaped bores that each provided two lanes.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on June 17, 1934. A crowd of 6,500 people saw Governor Frank F. Merriam assisted by Earl Lee Kelley (State Director of Public Works) and Alameda County Supervisor Thomas E. Caldecott (Chairman of Joint Highway District No. 13) viewed the ceremony. Although President Franklin D. Roosevelt was listed in the event program as a guest of honor, he was not in attendance.

The first phase of construction involved clearing the hillside and grading (shown here on the Oakland side). The Kennedy Tunnel and the original roads leading to it are visible in the upper part of the photograph. The lower location of the new tunnel meant a shorter climb but a greater distance for construction workers to bore.

On August 28, 1935, the north bore of the tunnel caved in near the western portal, killing three men. The contractor, Six Companies, Inc., had notified the directors of Joint Highway District No. 13 that it thought the tunnel design was faulty because of the instability of ground being tunneled.

The main part of the project was two parallel, concrete-lined tunnels, each about 3,000 feet long, one for eastbound travel and the other for westbound. Each had a 22-foot roadway with two traffic lanes and a three-foot sidewalk. Both ends had four-lane approaches.

Thousands of people lined the hill at the west portal to witness the dedication ceremony on December 5,

1937. More than 10,000 motorists backed up to Broadway and College Avenues to await the signal that opened the new bores linking the two counties.

Alameda County Supervisor Thomas Caldecott and California Governor Frank Merriam were among the dignitaries who attended the tunnel dedication after a breakfast at the Claremont Hotel. Following the speeches at the east portal, more than 4,000 motorists drove through the tunnel in the first hour it was open.

Nancy Borgeson was the first baby to ride through the Broadway Low Level Tunnel. In 1903, her grandmother Gertrude McNeil had been the first woman to drive through the Kennedy Tunnel. Nancy is shown with her mother Bertha Borgeson, youngest daughter of Gertrude and Robert McNeil of Lafayette.



Henry H. Myers, the architect for Joint Highway District No. 13, designed both the portal buildings and the approaches. He had worked with George Posey on the Posey Tube where he first used Art Deco ornamentation on the tube's portal buildings. Decorative detailing on the Broadway Low Level Tunnel is shown on the reinforced concrete medallions and other parts of the tunnel. The same four medallions appear on the faces of the two tunnel portals. The medallion at the left shows an eagle which was visible on the face of the eastern tunnel portals.



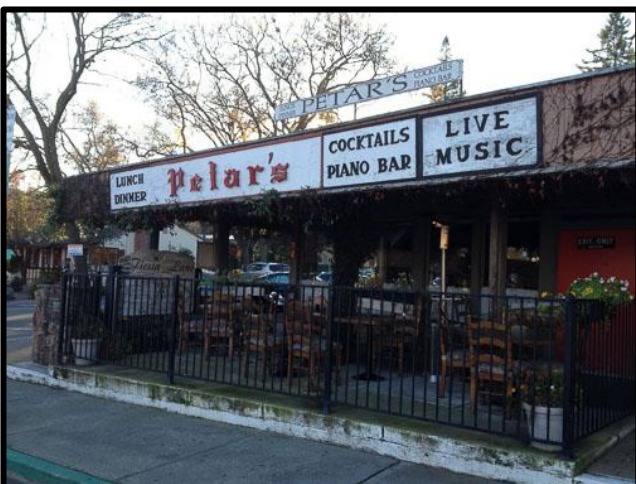
With the opening of the Broadway Low Level Tunnel, hundreds of East Bay residents purchased property in Contra Costa County. Oakland realtor Fred Wood reported that he sold seven home sites in his Moraga Woodlands development in one day. In 1938, half-acre to five-acre lots were available at a beginning price of \$1,000.

The tunnel formally opened was turned over to the California Division of Highways on November 13, 1937. Its completion coincided with the opening of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, which provided a more direct and convenient commute by automobile from Contra Costa County to Oakland and San Francisco.



PETAR'S RESTAURANT

Petar Jakovina was a well know Bay Area restaurateur who began his career at an early age. He was raised in San Francisco and was parking cars at the Fairmont Hotel when he was 15 years old. After World War II he became the youngest maître d' in the country at Bimbo's 365 Club, one of the best known nightclubs of the era. In his business life he



became friends with show business personalities, business and community leaders, and was part of the San Francisco North Beach restaurant and nightclub scene of the 1950s. In 1959 Petar and his original partner, Mitch Hoffman, opened Petar's Restaurant, bringing a little bit of San Francisco to Lafayette. His movie star good looks and personality brought customers from San Francisco and the entire Bay Area. His quick wit, gags, and jokes entertained two generations. There were few in

the Lafayette area who did not spend a prom night, a wedding party, or a family dinner at Petar's enjoying continental cuisine, the lively piano bar, the gorgeous waitresses, and the antics of his well-known waiters. Most of the ladies had a crush on him.

The original Petar's closed in July of 1979 and in May of 1980, Jakovina purchased Los Gallos Restaurant on Lafayette Circle where he offered American food. He chose to call this restaurant Petar's after his original establishment.

After Jakovina's death in 2003, Ned Kermaninejad owned and ran the restaurant until it closed in January 2013. The restaurant and bar were an institution in their 50 years ago of operation. Today the Hideout Restaurant occupies the space where Petar's was once located.

ORAL HISTORIES

Oral Histories which date from the 1970's have been stored on tapes and discs in the History Room. Many of these tapes have recently been digitized and are available for viewing on the Historical Society Website – lafayettehistory.org. In the top row on the web page you will find Archives/Oral Histories which will take you to the oral histories. Below are several of the oral histories that have recently been added to the website. The committee continues to work to make additional tapes available.

Millicent Hamburger: In 1941, the principal of the new Acalanes High School hired Millicent Hamburger, a trained and talented dance instructor from New York City, to be an English teacher and to establish a dance program for interested students. She would go on to inspire and direct the Acalanes Dance Group for 30 years, after which she returned to New York. Then for another 30 years she met annually with a group of former students for a reunion dance program. Her book about the Acalanes Dance Group, "When I Dance" inspired Sandra Bagnall to write and direct this 2002 video about this remarkable teacher and her students.

Chuck Bauman: Chuck Baumann was interviewed in March, 2024. He came to Lafayette in 1955 at age 6 when his father relocated the family to this growing community to establish and run a company that built swimming pools. He discusses growing up in the community with great schools and social activities. He worked for his father from a young age. Two of Chuck's uncles also ran pool companies, and he worked for them until he founded his own firm in 1977. Soon the Jacuzzi family gave him the opportunity to build the first combination pool and heated spa in Upper Happy Valley. When he eventually retired his son took over the business.

Chris Young: Chris was born in 1950 and was raised in Burton Valley. His parents founded and ran a coin-operated laundry and dry cleaning business on Golden Gate Way called Sunshine Cleaners. Chris worked in the business while he was growing up after his father taught him how to maintain and repair the equipment. The business continues today under the name Hamlin Cleaners. Chris has retired in Lafayette after a career in construction management and has recently expanded his long-term home here. He recalls the friendliness and slower pace of life people in Lafayette enjoyed 50 years ago.

Bill McNeil: This interview took place at the time that an antique barrel, which once held corn syrup, was added to the Lafayette Historical Society's collection. The barrel had originally been in use at the general store in Lafayette that was owned and operated by Bill's grandfather Robert McNeil. Bill, then 93 years of age, recalls some of the experiences he had in the store as a young boy. He also talks about his experiences in the US Army in Europe during World War II. He goes on to describe a wide range of incidents and individuals from his nearly one hundred years of local history.

Beverly Panfili Littorno: Beverly Panfilli Littorno was interviewed by Julie Sullivan in October, 2004. Her father Adolph, who had experience working in commercial fishery, along with her mother Barbara, opened a small fish market on Old Tunnel Road in 1945. It soon became a restaurant as well, called Lafayette Seafood Grotto. This business became one of the best known of the many restaurants that have operated in Lafayette over the years, lasting until the late 1980's. Beverly recalls that all of the family members, including those with full-time jobs, worked long hours in the restaurant every week.

Miler McGrath: Miler Magrath was interviewed by Julie Sullivan in October, 2005. In 1990 Miler took over management of Diamond K Supply from his father William, who had operated the business for over 40 years. Miler describes how the customer base shifted over the years from farmers and ranchers to builders and developers, and how Diamond K itself changed to meet the needs of the community.

Ted & Linda Murphey: Ted and Linda Murphey were interviewed in November, 1976. They had operated Murphey's Valley Prescription Pharmacy on a site near the present-day Wells Fargo Bank from 1947 to 1964. Twelve years later they described for their interviewer the other principle businesses—mostly restaurants and gas stations—that existed on Mt. Diablo Boulevard at that time.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE 2024

Welcome to our new members and to those who have recently renewed their membership or have made a donation:

William Power
Joan Evans
Mary Ann Hoisington
Annette Dale
Robbin Kroger
Stuart Robinson
Andrew Parrott

Katy Forman
Janet & Rick Cronk
Eric & Margaret Schreiber
Maureen Bagley
Anne & Marshall Grodin
Blake Hedlund
Lynn Houser
Andree Hurst

Sue Nurock
Wayne Lawson
Patricia Howard
Stuart Collett
Kim Bertolero
Marianne Monagle
Sheila Rogstad

Thank you for your support of the Lafayette Historical Society.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Your membership is exceedingly important as it makes it possible for our organization to pay annual rent to the City of Lafayette for our space and be able to pay for our phone, insurance, and other needed supplies. Donations are always appreciated.

Student Membership: \$15 ~ Individual Membership: \$30 ~ Family Membership: \$60



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PO Box 133, Lafayette Ca 94549
925-385-2297
www.lafayettehistory.org
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